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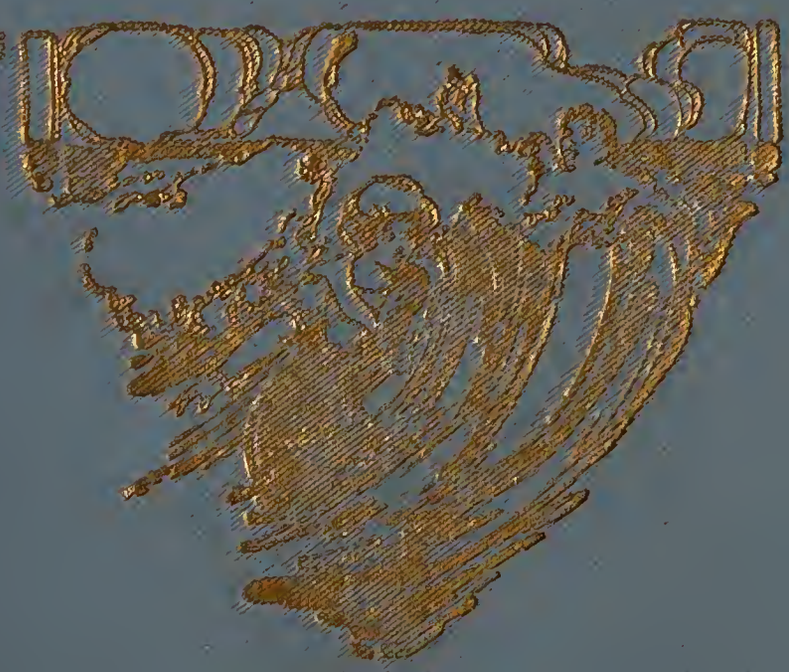
The Ways of Youth



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The Ways of Youth

By

Carl Boberg

Translated from the Swedish

By

Olga E. Lindborg

THE COVENANT BOOK CONCERN
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No 1

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I.

A Meeting at the Cemetery Gate.

IT was a beautiful summer evening. The clouds on the western horizon blushed like giant roses at the kisses of the setting sun. In the treetops the wind whistled weird rhapsodies. In the meadows it softly caressed the flowers and carried away of their fragrance with every waft. The birds rejoiced because summer had reached its zenith, and the air fairly echoed with their carols.

Peacefully, in the harmony of such a summer evening, lay the little chapel in the very heart of an old churchyard. And as the birds sang in the branches of the shade trees that surrounded it and towered over the tombstones, it seemed as if they wished to remind the living that the dead lived and rejoiced in another world. Here and there folks roamed about the churchyard. Some were tending graves—planting flowers and greens and watering them.

By the side of a newly made grave, covered with faded wreaths and flowers, reminiscent of the burial day, stood three women, dressed in deep mourning. Apparently they were mother and daughters. The older woman wept bitterly. The daughters wept, too, but one could see that they tried to control their outburst of grief in order to comfort the mother. The mother seemed so frail and worn. It was evident that the new-made grave held the remains of the husband and father. How his wife must have loved him! Or, perhaps, there were worrisome circumstances that now intensified her grief. At the grave so many memories come to life. Those who stand there grieving weep for various reasons. Some are overwhelmed because they loved so deeply. Others weep because they failed to love enough.

The grave is such a silent place! The departed has ceased to speak with tongue. But so much clearer sounds the voice of memory, and the conscience of those who stand above the grave cannot be silenced. One of the most beautiful traits of human

nature comes to the fore before the grave. The living find it easy to forget the faults of the departed one, and all the good that was in him seems to come to new life in their memories. It is as if all the good he ever did when he was in the flesh, arises after death to assert itself over all the sins and shortcomings of which he was guilty, and to excuse these and blot them out, and shield the holiness of his place in the hearts of those who loved and cherished him. Perhaps that is but one of the natural ways of love's power in human life, revealing even in death the glory and beauty of that divine dynamic.

If we could think and feel for each other in life with the same depth of kindliness as we do at the grave, our dwelling together would surely be kindlier and more sympathetic than it often is. Why should not this thought help us so to live, seeking each other's happiness? Suddenly enough we may part to meet no more until the judgment. Whether or not such thoughts as these were rife in the hearts of the widow and her daughters in that peaceful

churchyard that beautiful summer evening our story will bye and bye reveal.

On the road outside the churchyard gate came a young man, whistling idly as he hurried along. He might have been about twenty-two, and, to judge by his clothes, a seaman. His gait was energetic. His face was bright and comely. As he reached the churchyard gate he stopped and ceased his whistling. He heard something to which his ears had not before been attuned. He heard the carols of the birds in the shade trees of the churchyard. He was about to slip into the cemetery when he saw three women, dressed in mourning, approach the gate. The eldest was weeping convulsively. One of the younger women was busily trying to comfort her, as she led her tenderly by the arm. The other turned and looked back. Her gaze was full of gratitude, it seemed, and love, as well as sorrow, as she looked at the grave they had just left. As she neared the gate and turned to leave the churchyard, she almost collided with the youth. Their eyes met. Blushing, she hesitated a moment. Her face, becoming-

ly framed in the black hat and veil, which she wore, was beautiful and youthful. The blush on her cheeks, and the earnest, sorrowful eyes enhanced that beauty. Youth, earnestness, purity, gentleness, beauty—presented itself incarnate before the young seaman. He felt compelled to doff his cap. And through him surged a strange feeling of something wonderfully wrought in happiness, and an appreciation of beauty that he never before had experienced. The young woman passed on her way with the other two. But the young man stood motionless by the cemetery gate a long while. He gazed after the women, until they were gone from view. And as he gazed he felt how, somehow, there was change of spirit in him. But a short time ago he had no thought about anything. Now he experienced a feeling of deep reverence, and his thoughts were rushing rapidly toward something coherent—coherent because of reverence for beauty and purity and simplicity in life. Was it her gaze—this unknown young woman's gaze—that had so, with sudden power, made this deep change in him?

Yes, for as he looked after her, he thought: "If she would only turn and look at me before they disappear at the end of the road!" But what could such a gaze mean to him? It might be a last fond glance toward the grave they had just left! How childish of him! But he thought it and wished it, nevertheless.

And, sure enough! She did turn and gazed back! His heart beat quickly! It was as if a luminous star had arisen on the horizon of his life, shining just for him. And then she disappeared together with her companions beyond the bend in the road and the shadows of the trees.

He felt so all alone. The sun was nearly set. But the birds still sang, and their song gladdened his heart. It was so clear and full of feeling. And then he began to realize that he was in the sleeping place of the dead. Was it for the dead the birds were singing? Anyway their warble was of life and hope, and not a sigh of sorrow marred a single note. Nor was there anything sad or depressive in the scent of clover and fresh green leaves that the wind brought him. It was just

a perfect, peaceful summer evening for all living souls!

But, as he sat there among the tombstones, the young sailor began to think of other days. He began to think of his mother. His mother slept in the churchyard, too. It was ages ago that he visited her grave. He was only sixteen when she was buried there. It was in midwinter that her grave had been dug. The snow covered everything. It stormed and blew the day of the burial, so that everyone shivered and suffered in the cold. His father, he remembered, caught cold that day and a long and severe illness followed. There had been hard times. Then one day, not long after his father had recovered his health, he remarried. There were little children in the home who had to have a mother. But for the young man, who now sat among the tombstones and reminisced, there had been no home since his mother died.

Now he recalled his mother and the happy days when he had had her love and care. Did he feel as deeply and beautifully about her as he had noticed the

young woman, whose gaze had so transformed him, seemed to feel about the dear one in that newly made grave? He remembered how deeply moved he had been when his mother on her sick-bed had spoken to him about her going away. Many a night he had wept himself to sleep, thinking about the things she said. In the daytime, among his comrades, it was easy to forget it all. His mother had often bidden him to sit beside her bed and read to her from the New Testament and the Psalms. And though he loved her and wanted to please her, there had been times when he rather would have spent his evenings among outside companions. It was so monotonous, he thought, to sit there and read to her. And then, too, he had to listen to her admonishment, when she warned him of evil companions and pleaded with him to seek God and His people and the ways of righteousness. He had to promise her all this. But his promises were merely words. He never lived them.

Right after her death he did think of them—thought of those promises that he

had made her. At night he prayed and thought of her words: "Dear child, be kind and thoughtful toward your daddy and your sisters and brothers, and promise me that you will meet me in heaven, where I by grace shall be waiting for you all." At times he would read a chapter in the Bible and repeat some of the Psalms that he so often had read to his mother. Indeed, he still remembered them. But soon he became neglectful even of the prayers and the reading. And gradually the beautiful memory of his mother faded, and her admonishments were forgotten.

Now he thought about looking for her grave. He found it. But it was sunken and neglected. A little bird sat warbling on the small cross that marked it. This touched the young man's memory and awakened a deep feeling in him. One of his mother's favorite hymns came to mind, and he heard himself repeating a verse of it:

"Like a bird at dawn, on wings of gladness
With joy I enter into realms of light,
Where harptones mingle with the songs of angels,
And everlasting day shuts out all night."

The little bird flew toward the sunset. The young man's gaze followed, and he stared into the west, as he sat there by his mother's grave, until the twilight entered. What he saw of beauty in that western sky, he had never before seen. The clouds fairly burned in splendor of coloring and light—fairy islands and giant mountains and endless seas! And then the shadows, until it all had faded out and become dusk and blue and one-colored before the onslaught of night. "How wonderful," he thought, "must be the glory land where there is no night! The homeland of the blessed!" And he recalled the passage he had read to his mother the night before she died:

"And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): . . . and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or

he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life."

And then he thought how little he had done to fulfill his promises to his mother. Would he ever enter the land, where he knew of a certain that his mother must be? His conscience told him that he could not hope to enter there if he continued to live as he had lived heretofore. Then he tried to compromise his conscience with the thought that most folks lived as he did. Would they all, then, be shut out of that city, turned away from that land? How then could God rejoice in His creation? And yet, there was a verse of Scripture that said something about "striving to enter through the narrow gate!" Yes, he had heard the minister say that in some sermon. The Saviour of Man must thereby have wanted to turn men's attention to their own very personal relation to Him and His kingdom. To shield oneself among the masses, and defend one's action under the mantle of the group, would be cowardly. Such could not save the spiritual life of the individual.

That had been the gist of the minister's warning.

Alfred, for that was the young seaman's name, had an excellent memory. He remembered nearly the whole of the catechism, and many, many verses of Scripture. And the prayers and hymns of the Church Psalter were familiar to him word for word. He now recalled very especially the prayer for the evening—this Saturday evening that so strangely found him hovering over his mother's grave. Although he did not repeat it aloud, he prayed in his heart:

"Let me rest with my thoughts directed on Thee, with a heart that seeketh its peace in Thee, that seeketh its all in Thee, that I may feel secure in Thy divine care. Let me awaken to a new day, if so be Thy gracious will, prepared for Thy sabbath, fit to worship Thee and sing praises in Thy sanctuary."

It was an echo in his soul of days gone by, for it was long ago that he had repeated that prayer. How strange that it should take hold of him now! But, then, he stood beside the grave of his mother!

She had come to the end of her week of toil and was celebrating the sabbath of the blessed. To him remained her love and her words of blessing and warning. Those must necessarily bring to the surface of his nature that which was best in him. He now lived over again the days of his childhood, when these best things were sown in his soul. He recalled how his mother came to meet him as he came from school in the late afternoon when it was growing dark. He always felt so safe when he held her hand as they hurried home through the deep woods. He was afraid of the dark. The lurking shadows were like great, prowling beasts to him. Then, in wintertime, when he would get his feet wet in the snowdrifts, his mother would anxiously draw him into the house and to the fireside, pull off the soggy boots and stockings, hang them up to dry, and make him glad and comfortable. When buttons tore off his jacket, as they so often did, how eagerly she sewed them on again. Always she worked, washed and mended, and did a myriad tasks energetically like an ant. When his birthday came

around, she always had a sweet surprise for him, and she would pat his head gently and say: "My little boy, the Lord bless you and keep you and guide you through life." Somehow he felt now, as these scenes flitted by one by one on the retina of his memory, that his mother must have realized that she could not long be his guardian angel—that she would have to leave him before he was grown and strong and well on his way in life.

His heart was melting. At least it felt as if it were. And suddenly Alfred became terribly aware of his sinfulness. How had he rewarded all this love and tenderness and sacrifice that his mother had showered upon him? He had not even visited her grave a single time in three years, although he frequently had passed along the road by the churchyard. Tears came to his eyes. He bowed down and patted the *grave*. He longed to make his mother feel that pat, as if it had been placed on her cheek—a love-filled caress, full of sympathy and understanding—and remorse.

And in his heart arose so many new feelings—strange and wonderfully sweet. It was as if a better world had opened its portals to him and let him breathe a clearer, purer, freer atmosphere. It was as if all the commonplace and grim and bitter things of life had fled, and left a clean board for a kindlier, a holier life within and without.

"To-morrow," he thought, "I am going to church in the morning and to the little mission house in the afternoon." And his decision was prompted by a will to hear and learn and do as becomes a man who loves and fears his Creator.

This decision grew even more firm as he walked away from the churchyard and met a drunken farmer on the road, riding along at wild pace and caring nothing for others, pedestrian or rider.

"What a terrible way to drive home of a Saturday evening!" thought Alfred. "No reverence for living or dead, no thought of the coming sabbath, no pity for the horse, no shame for his drunken condition, no fear of God! Truly, a Godless life is slavery!"

II.

The Sabbath.

AS the church bells summoned folks to worship on Sunday morning, Alfred wandered past his mother's grave and entered the chapel in the churchyard. He went that way to church just to gladden his mother, as he thought, and show her that he wished to attend services. For he no longer counted her among the dead. He felt that somehow she was living and aware of him, following his actions with her loving interest. The sun shone brightly, and the birds had sung for him all along his journey churchward. Their carols were now mingling with the louder ones of the church chimes.

From the chapel steps Alfred viewed the city of the dead. All the graves were bathed in sunlight, the grass was fresh with dew. The living, in their Sunday best, were sauntering along the paths. It seemed as if all were coming up to worship in the House of God.

As he stood there, enjoying this Sunday morning scene of peace and contentment, his gaze suddenly alighted upon two young women, dressed in white. They, too, were coming toward the church. Never had Alfred felt such joy of a sabbath morning. The harmonious relation between living and death, earth and heaven, the supernatural and the natural, presented itself to him in very tangible ways. And with thoughts of deep reverence and rejoicing, he entered the House of God to pray.

The hymns, the prayers, the Scripture reading were especially personal to him, and conversed with his soul as never before. The sermon expounded itself about "that which was said of old" and "that which Jesus said." The pastor tried to show his congregation the manner of Jesus' beholding not only the outward act but also the inner motive—the emotions and the thoughts that lay back of every deed. In the eyes of Jesus bitter and hateful thoughts are akin to murder, and lustful thoughts akin to adultery. "Who then is without sin?" thundered the pulpit

orator. And Alfred answered in his heart: "Not one!" But the pastor answered: "That one who has been forgiven his sins, who has been washed from guilt in the blood of the Lamb. And that blessed soul can be *you*, my dear friend!"

Alfred had never before listened with such attention and such keen desire to know, as he did this Sunday morning to the sermon in the little churchyard chapel. And when the pastor talked at length about the fortunate soul that in the eyes of Jesus may be clean and sweet, Alfred felt as never before his great need of cleansing and sweetening. At the close of the sermon, when the congregation bowed in prayer, he not only bowed his head, but also his *heart* before the Throne of Grace, and sighed and prayed that he might be among them who shall inherit the kingdom of God. He prayed for forgiveness and new birth.

As he left the church, he spied the three women, dressed in mourning, among the departing worshippers. They walked a little ahead of him, and must have sat behind him at the service. If his heart had

rejoiced on the way to church, and been full of strange wonder during the worship hour, it now leaped almost beyond bounds of gladness as he beheld the three whom he had met the previous evening and through whose meeting his life had taken on a change. He could not analyze the ecstasy that surged in him. But he began wishing again that she—his *star*, as he had begun to think her,—would turn around and smile, would turn around and at least gaze at him! He wished it so much that he was tempted to pray God to grant it. But he hesitated about praying, for another thought rushed to mind, punishing this one. Surely it was the time to think only of God and his soul, as he wandered away from God's House.

But his wish was granted, nevertheless. It happened because some commotion in the church entry broke the deep stillness of the surrounding churchyard, and folks began looking back to see what had fallen. Just as *she* looked back, their eyes met! If *she* felt or thought anything of the incident, Alfred could not tell, but her glance penetrated his soul! It filled him! He

could think of nothing else but her beautiful eyes. Like a bit of driftwood on the stream his interest in the day's sermon flowed out with her, as she disappeared toward the cemetery gate. But there remained a music in his heart, strange and sweet, yet sad to a degree that made him wish he might go away and be alone and weep. Why these emotions? His innermost being was like an April day with interchange of sun and rain, and nature waking up from sleep, still dreaming, and groping to find the assurance of a May.

He retraced his steps to the broad shelf of the church entrance, and stood there gazing after her. Unknown, as she was to him, he felt for her a beautiful kinship, and realized that for him she meant more than anyone else on earth. Although she was dressed in somber black, she gleamed brighter to him than the girls in white, who had so fascinated his eye as he came up to service, and who now glided past him on their homeward way.

But the three somberclad women had not gone out of the churchyard gate! No,

there they went, along a side path of the graveyard. They were bound for that new mound, where they had been the day before. Alfred felt tempted to follow them. But something in his heart advised him not to do so. Instead he sauntered down the main roadway and to his mother's grave. Bending over her sunken resting place, he prayed again to her God a prayer for forgiveness and guidance and peace. The church bells tolled the Benediction. The whole air vibrated with their music. Alfred felt that he stood on holy ground. "The service in God's House is over," he thought, "but for me it has just begun—in my heart—and by God's grace it shall continue every day of my life till He grants me the joy of the perfect Sabbath in His heaven."

Human footsteps had almost deserted the churchyard as Alfred turned away from his mother's grave. Nor was he adverse to being so all alone. But, as he neared the gate, he saw the three women, in black, a little ahead of him again. A carriage awaited them at the entrance. Alfred had mastered his emotions enough

to reason how foolish it was for him to keep thinking of her. She was of high estate! The equipage witnessed of affluence, he thought! And he was but a poor seaman! Besides he had only seen her twice, and perhaps he never again would meet her. He could not help, however, he had been so fascinated by her. Surely God has given hearts to the poor as well as the rich. And that which had so taken possession of *his* heart at the meeting with *her* had truly been naught but noble and good. Even if he never again should meet her, it seemed clear to him now that God had used her to point him the way upward and Godward.

And yet, Alfred longed that she might once again turn and gaze at him. He prayed this time that she would. He followed her wistfully with his eyes as a flower turns to the sunlight, or a hungry child reaches for bread. "It's a good thing she doesn't know how silly I am!" he thought. He feared that the women might observe how eagerly he followed them.

The elder woman had entered the carriage. Alfred wondered which of the daugh-

ters would follow her next. He wished *his star* would enter last. And she did! Would she turn and look back before the carriage door closed? Alfred hardly dared to stare with wide open eyes! His heart —his stupid, uncontrolable heart—thumped wildly. How well that *she* could not know it!

But the miracle happened! She did turn and look back. She not only gazed *toward* but right *at* him! And it seemed to him as if there was an apology in her gaze, as if she wanted to tell him something. The deep reverence that had embraced his soul during the morning service swooped over him now. He stood still to hear the music that stirred within his heart. Zephyrs from enchanted coasts were playing around him. How strange that her eyes should have so wonderful a power over him to summon untold joys within his breast! He stood there and thought and thought and thought!

The carriage drove away. Bye and bye Alfred awakened out of his reveries. He felt lonely. But he also felt so rich, so joyous, so altogether at peace with the

world. He dwelt in a kingdom of light and life, where flowers bloomed and birds sang, and where fresh mountain brooks gurgled down blue hillsides into broad valleys, whose unlimited vistas of beauty stretched toward unexplored lands and endless skies—the wonderful kingdom of love!

That afternoon Alfred betook himself to the little mission meeting house, where seamen often attended service. A seaman pastor was scheduled to preach there. He was a young man, full of life and vigor and sympathies that reached the seafaring man. One could fathom from his manner of speaking that the young preacher had chosen his work through the urge of deep conviction that it was his duty and his privilege. He spoke of life's tumultuous sea, stirred by storm of lust and selfish aim. He spoke of the strident ways of men that led to wrecks. If only man would ask the Master of Life to enter the boat, and let the light from the Word of Life be the beacon for its course, no storms, however fiercely blowing, could

send the craft adrift, or wreck it upon the rocks of tribulation.

True, even the bark that has taken the Master aboard must meet with storms. Sometimes it may seem as if it were losing against the wind and wave. But the disciples of the Master have learned to pray and to trust. And in the darkest moment they can hear His voice, bidding the angry deep be still.

The seaman pastor continued to speak of the temptations that beset the good-natured seaman as he steps ashore. "The sharks at sea are less dangerous by far," he said, "than the sharks on land. For the land sharks show their teeth with smiles, and light up the city streets with enchantment and amusement. But their aims are no less destructive than the sea monster's. For they rob the victim of all that he has, and finally crush him without mercy in the clutches of drunkenness and sin of every filthy description."

Then he went on to tell about the work of the seamen's mission. He drew for his listeners its plan of providing legitimate pleasures and clean amusements for

the sailor boy on land. He told of the visitations of the mission personnel aboard the ship in harbor, of the distribution of good books and of the Bible, of the open door at the mission house, where a library and rest room and many other inviting things were found that could help the young man find soul-peace and heart-comfort and a haven for his thoughts.

Alfred thought all this very interesting. It revealed to him what Christian love did to counteract the evil that surrounded him, and give shelter and pleasure and edification to the sailor. Stories of actual experiences in the work completed and illuminated the pastor's talk. As the kindliness and reasonableness of the work unfolded itself to Alfred's view, he determined that he would seek the seamen's mission house in every port to which he journeyed. When the meeting was over, he made up his mind to shake hands with the man who had spoken and so moved his sympathies. As he started for the platform, something unexpected startled his attention. The two young women in mourning come from a side room into the

meeting hall. One of them stepped up on the platform, and seated herself at the organ. No, she was not the one whose eyes had bewitched Alfred. She was *her* sister. She commenced singing, accompanying herself on the organ:

"From deep within my heart, oh
A longing wings its way,
Jerusalem, my home, to thee!
Fore there all pain and sorrow
Shall cease and pass away."

The singer's voice was beautiful, and she sang with deep feeling. The earnestness of the singer added charm and depth to the song. The silence and attention of the audience, that a few minute before had begun to stir about in noisy fashion, was now very marked. When the singer had let the last strains of the hymn die away, she intended to step down from the platform, but a deep bass voice rang out in the congregation: "Oh, please sing us another!"

With a little courtsey and a sweet smile, the lady returned to the organ and sang

with all the depth of feeling she could muster:

If I gained the world but lost the Saviour,
  Were my life worth living for a day?
Could my yearning heart find rest and comfort,
  In the things that soon must pass away?
If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,
  Would my gain be worth the life-long strife?
Are all earthly pleasures worth comparing
  For a moment with a Christ-filled life?

Had I wealth and love in fullest measure,
  And a name revered both far and near,
Yet no hope beyond, no harbor waiting,
  Where my storm-tossed vessel I could steer;
If I gained the world, but lost the Saviour,
  Who endured the cross and died for me,
Could then all the world afford a refuge,
  Whither in my anguish I might flee?

Many an eye was tearfilled as the song ended. Because it had gone from the heart of the singer, it touched the heart of the listener. Alfred, too, began to wipe his tears. In his heart he blessed the singer, and blessed the moment that had brought him face to face with the two angels in black. He prayed fervently that he might gain the Treasure that so trans-

cended the human heart and transfigured it that the possessor could lift and inspire and transform those who came in contact with it. He wished to cherish that Treasure in his own heart. But strangely enough, when he thought of the Divine love, he also thought of *her*! What joy it would be to have *her*, too! Could such wild dream ever come true? If she, as he now realized it, already possessed the divine gift in her heart, could she also come to love him. Surely his love for her would not crowd out his love for Jesus! Could it not be possible to unite the two —the divine and the human love in the human heart?

As he pondered he saw quite clearly that *her* love, beautiful as it would be to him, never could outweigh the Saviour's. Human beings must age and die. To live with eternal hope within their breast, they must have this greater love, of which *her* sister so feelingly had sung. Even if he dared offer *her* all the love his soul could give, she still would need the greater gift—the Saviour's! She would, therefore, have to take a second place in his heart,

and he in hers. The first Commandment warned of "other gods". Man is so prone to worship the lesser lights, the incarnate ideals that come before his human eye.

Alfred's determination to shake hands with the seaman preacher was frustrated. The two young women in black were there beside him, and Alfred felt it would be an intrusion on his part to try to greet the pastor in their midst. That seemed to him like getting too close to fire. But how he did long for a glance from *her*. Perhaps he never again would see her. As he stood and stared toward the platform he spied a ring—an engagement ring—on the left hand of the woman who had sung. Then he noticed that the pastor wore an engagement ring, too. He read in these symbols the probable secret. Then the pastor nodded to her, who wore the ring, and spoke to her. In turn she beckoned to her sister and whispered something in her ear. The sister mounted the platform steps and seated herself at the organ and began to play. She played a fascinating prelude, then began accompanying her sister who again sang a beautiful hymn. The

men who had already wended their way out of the mission house began to come back. They seated themselves in small groups here and there in the meeting hall, and listened with an eagerness that bespoke their heartfelt appreciation. Alfred remained standing. He wanted to see, if he could, whether the musician also wore an engagement ring. As she arose from the organ he spied a narrow pearl-studded band on the little finger of her right hand. No, he could not detect an engagement ring. Why this should cause him such a feeling of joy, he could not explain. But it did! It was sheer childishness of him to dream that such a lovely flower had grown for plucking at the knotted hands of a rough seaman.

But she was gazing out over the chairs in the meeting hall! She seemed to be looking for someone in particular! Alfred wished that she might find him and grant him another glance like the one she gave him in the forenoon. He had hardly wished it when her eyes beheld him. A strong, warm, vibrant glance she gave him. Perhaps he was letting his imagination run

away with him! No, surely he was being scanned by those wonderful eys! And the same weird surgings tumulted in his breast as had torn their way in there at the other two meetings!

With trembling knees Alfred sought the exit. "Can this be of Thee, dear Lord," he murmured, "or is it merely my wild fancy that is carrying me away?" He wiped his brow and went on soliloquizing: "Is it Thy Spirit, Lord, or is it my suddenly awakened love for this young woman that makes me so queer, so uncertain at heart? Have you prepared for me a fate which I cannot see, cannot fathom, but which shall grow into being through this meeting with her? No matter, Lord, of one thing I am sure—I am richer and happier than I have ever been before. And in the sufficiency of Thy grace, I will tread the path of righteousness hereafter. Keep me in Thy love and guide me by Thy hand."

It had been a perfect sabbath day for Alfred.

III.

In Port.

SPRING had come after a long and severe winter of deep snows and thick ice. The most stubborn of the drifts were now melting leisurely before the warm breath of the spring sunlight, and the ice, groaning and breaking, was floating in large blocks from the shoreline out to sea. Soon the entire bay was clear of it. The waves once more sang joyously as they lapped the rocks and sand in their ebb and flow. Gulls began to congregate on the beach, and on an early morning one could hear echoes of riffle shots among the cliffs. Already the hunters were trying their vision and their aim from crevices in the rockbound coast, and setting up dummies to entice the gulls landward.

Fishermen, too, were launching their boats and setting out toward the greater depths to lay their nets and haul in their catch. White sails fluttered merrily in the breezes among the small islands and along the bayline.

In port the longshoremen and the sailors had their busy days. One could hear the sound of the hammer all day long, and there were scraping and painting without end. The odor from the paintpot, and of tar and pitch, defied the smells from the sea. Dirty little urchins clambered among the riggings and the masts of the anchored schooners, vying with one another in accomplishing the most daring stunts, trying to reach the top of the highest masts, thinking little about tears and smears and scratches either to skin or clothing. Driven from one ship, they would but hustle to another where, perhaps, the vigil was less strict.

Aboard the schooners, in leisure hours, the seamen told wild tales. On the deck of a high-masted craft, called Hilding, a young sailor told of some fishermen who once invited a dare. The ship lay in port. The fishermen came aboard to sell of their recent catch. They were asked to have some coffee and a drink of gin. In the course of hospitality someone asked how far it might be to the top of the foremast. Another replied that it was so high that

the man who had asked the question would surely never reach it! This angered the fisherman who had asked it. The gin had gone to his head, and nothing could now defy him. He meant to show the smart retorter that nothing could keep him from reaching that top! Hastily he began to climb. As long as he kept looking upward and climbing hard, it went well with him. But the minute he looked down he lost his bearing and fell. Luckily he fell into the sea, from which his companions recued him. The only ill effect he suffered was a little nausea. But he kept saying that if he only had kept looking up, he could have climbed to heaven! It was because he turned and looked down that he swooned and fell.

A pious old captain, who happened to overhear this story, chimed in and said: "Yes, boys, the old fellow is quite right. If we only look up we can climb far. If we look down, we are apt to lose our balance in life and fall—fall in sin and all its consequences."

"Yes, Captain," replied the sailor. "But this old salt fell into the *sea*—not into sin!"

"Well, I didn't say so, did I?" responded the captain. "Nevertheless, you'll admit that he fell as a result of his pride—foolish pride! I have fallen, fallen in sin, when I have looked down instead of up. I'm afraid you boys do not get my point of view in this little sermon."

"You are right, Uncle Berg, sounded the voice of a handsome seaman, who hopped over the scooner railing and joined his fellows as he spoke. "If we do not keep our gaze Godward when temptations come to us, we will soon fall."

The handsome young seaman and the old captain then greeted one another with a hearty handshake and moved along the deck to the captain's cabin.

"When did you arrive?" asked Captain Berg.

"A little while ago by train. I've been at your house, too, to seek you. Your folks told me you had already boarded the 'Hilding', so I came here."

"Well, how did you make out, my boy?"

"Splendidly, thank the Lord. I passed the captain's examination with good marks."

"Just as I expected!" said the older man, a ring of keen delight in his fatherly voice. "What is your aim?"

"That is what I wish to talk over with you. I have just signed up for a first mate's place aboard a freighter that carries iron and lumber abroad, likely to England, I presume."

"Then we shall not see much of you in this port, perhaps. I'm sorry! But you are not going immediately? Can't you come home with me now and stay over night?"

"If I may, I assure you I shall be delighted to visit with you until to-morrow!"

As the two took their departure from the ship, there was a murmuring and a speculation among the crew as to who the new young captain might be. Someone said that he knew him as the son of a merchant, and that he had lived such a wild life in his early youth that his father, to get rid of him and his scandals, had sent him to sea. He had been converted from all his sins and follies by a clergyman in Hamburg, and the result of this reclamation was evident in his remark of the af-

ternoon, and in his intimacy with Captain Berg, who worried so about Christian missions!

"That isn't true," said another. "I know him. His name is Alfred Brandt. He is the son of a farmer. My brother has sailed the seas with him. The first year of his sailor life he was a happy-go-lucky fellow. But one evening after a visit to his mother's grave, he changed. He had begun to think of the promises to be good that he had made his mother. He had attended church and been converted. Now he has passed his captain's examination, for which he has studied a long time."

"What did you say he had promised his mother?" asked one of the younger boys.

"He had promised her that he would read the Bible every day and say his prayers," answered the teller of the tale.

"That's what I promised my mother, too," confessed the boy.

"Well, haven't you fulfilled your promises?" sneered another of his companions.

"No, I've not thought about them much."

"You better begin to remember them then, and think about them a great deal,"

snickered the teaser. "For then you may be able to rise to the dignity of first mate or even captain before very long. And if you die unmarried and do not know where to donate your savings, remember me in your last will and testament. Then you can soar in peace to another world!"

"That would be a foolish thing to do," scorned another of the group. "Wouldn't he do better to will his savings to the saloonkeeper direct?"

"Ah, come on," said one of the elder seamen. "Let us give up this joking about serious matters. Whatever you may think of it, can't you see that there is something very good in this conversion business?"

"In the end it seems to work out best," agreed the fellow whose brother had sailed the seas with Alfred Brandt.

The discussion was interrupted and work aboard began again. The "Hilding's" captain did not wish to hear his crew argue during working hours.

Captain Berg had charge of the port. He was an able man and God-fearing and righteous. Alfred Brandt had found in him a fatherly counsellor and friend, and in his

home a peaceful and hospitable haven, where he often came to visit when he was in port. The captain's wife, a motherly, kindly woman, and two daughters, made him always welcome whether the captain was at home or not.

There was music in that home. The girls played the organ and piano, and sang. The old captain fiddled quite adeptly. In the evenings they gathered together to play and sing. To Alfred this was most entertaining. He was himself quite musical. And since his conversion he enjoyed the beautiful hymns of the church more than any other music. Little wonder that he should feel at home in the Berg household with its spirituality and its song. Bye and bye it became rumored that Berg's younger daughter was much infatuated with him, and that in time she would certainly be Mrs. Brandt. But time passed. Alfred took his mate-examination and then his captain's. Surely now the engagement would be announced, at least so the gossip had it.

When Alfred returned from the captain's examination, and accepted the old

captain's invitation to visit with him over night, some of the neighbors and friends were asked to spend the evening at the Berg home in his honor. It was a happy evening spent in conversation, singing, reading and prayer. But the hours sped on and when time came for the company to disperse, nothing had happened in the way of announcing an engagement. Neither Alfred nor the little Miss Berg knew anything of the expectation on the part of their friends. Never had an endearing word passed between them. Strange how one's friends and acquaintances know more of one's private affairs than oneself!

Indeed, Alfred Brandt was in love! But not with little Miss Berg. He was in love with *her*, whose eyes had gazed upon him that memorial time in the old churchyard near his childhood home. He was in love with *her*, who had deigned to turn back by the churchyard gate and give him the tenderest glance that he had ever seen. Alfred realized how futile this love was, for he had yet not met her in a more tangible way. He had never spoken with her. Why did he cherish her so in his

thoughts? Why dream of her, as he did? Perhaps the idea had infected him so that his imagination was becoming sickened? But he felt strong and happy in his thought of her. And he had not forced it upon himself. It had come to him like a flash of lightning! He could not help it! Can the magnetic needle help that it must constantly point northward? Surely there is something secretly magnetic in human life, in human experience, that draws two souls toward one another with unexplainable power. History has proved it. The Bible has told it. God has led man in ways of which he was not aware, toward goals which only God could provide.

Her image pressed itself deeper and deeper into the recesses of his innermost being. It grew, and commanded his whole heart. There could not possibly be room there for anyone else. Nor had Alfred ever experienced any but the noblest influence from this talisman that he harbored in his heart—this great and all-absorbing love that he held for her. True, she had made him dream. But, too, she had spurred his ambition, put iron into his

energies, guarded him from evil temptations, and made him buoyant in the sloughs of despond. Indeed, it was the thought of *her* that had made him ambitious in his studies, mustered his ability to rise above the common horde of toilers to become worthy of her even in rank, should it ever be granted him to meet her again. For a Christian can be just as much a Christian in the common sailor rank, as he can in the captain's stripes. Alfred's ambition as a Christian would not alone have spurred him on to work for a captaincy. No, it was *she* who urged him on to that.

He knew now who she was. He had tried to find that out in his home community, and had verified his findings in a little seaport town in England. In the latter place he had met the seaman pastor, who had spoken so wonderfully to his sympathies on that long-ago Sunday afternoon. What he that afternoon had suspected regarding the engagement of the pastor and the singer, he now knew to be true. For he had met them both, seen and taken part in their mission work, and even visited in their home, where so much kind-

liness and love was lavished upon him that he felt he never could repay. Now he had the hope, too, of some day again seeing *her*, the bride of *his* dreams. The ship, whose first mate he soon was to be, would sail to port not far from *her*. When in land he would look her up. He had greetings to her from her sister and brother-in-law. How he longed for that opportunity!

He recalled how he, as a little boy, in company with some playmates, had run toward the rainbow one day. It seemed to dip down in all the glory of its seven colors behind some tall trees in the heart of the woods nearby. The boys ran until they were tired. When they reached the spot where they had seen it dip down, it was not there. They looked up and beheld it shining over the treetops and it seemed as if it dipped down a little farther on. As they started for that spot the rainbow began to pale. Then it disappeared altogether. What if the rainbow of his dreams—the gorgeous bow of hope and love and promise—should fade, should disappear, as he neared the place where he knew it must dip down in the realities of human experience?

IV.

In the City.

THE heavy gray twilight of an autumn evening cast its long shadows over the city. The street lights were beginning to twinkle, and the park lights blinked among the trees, whose naked branches shivered while the wind mischievously swept their dried leaves over the ground.

Summer with all its glory was gone. It was again the time for making houses snug and warm against the onslaughts of winter storms.

But on the streets of the city people hurried to and fro as they always were wont to do. The trolley cars were filled with commuters. Those who labored in shops and factories had just finished their day's toll and were homeward bound. Here and there in the cars white-collared toilers mingled with hand laborers, but the crowd that now hustled for home was largely made up of those who must lift the heaviest burdens and sustain the dirtiest hands in the routine of industry.

Among such a crowd rode a young wife and her little two-year old daughter. The child was dressed in white from head to foot and attracted much admiration as she knelt on the car seat beside her mother. She turned the soles of her little well-shod feet toward the passengers and pressed her chubby face close to the window, for she was bent on watching the world outside. At one of the street intersections, where the trolley had stopped to discharge and take on passengers, a group of rough-looking workmen had gotten aboard. They looked to be bricklayers by trade, for their clothing was spattered with plaster. Most of them remained standing on the trolley platform, for the car was already filled to capacity. But one big burly fellow, with black whiskers, sharp eyes in which gleamed a bit of humor and a bigger bit of resentful spirit, and of age about fifty, edged his way into the car, reached out with his big grimy hands and took the little golden-locked, white-clad girl, first in his arms and then on his lap, as he planted himself in the place the child had occupied. "You don't mind sitting in

an old daddy's lap, do you?" he said laughingly, and added: "Then you won't take up the seat that rightly belongs to a poor, tired workingman!" It all happened so quickly! The little girl did not seem to take offense. She seemed eager enough to begin an inspection of this strange "old daddy" and pull his black whiskers, but her mother, quick as a tiger, forestalled any such friendliness. She snatched the child from the man's lap, and hissed angrily: "Be so kind as to let the child keep her place. I have paid ten cents for it!" Evidently the woman had no sense of humor! The man arose, took the child from her mother's embrace, and placed her back on the seat. Giving the mother a rather bitter look, he said: "When folks like you want 'your rights,' you seem wide enough awake, but when you need to look to your duties, you sleep! Can't you see that the child soils the clothes of the other passengers, who must wriggle past her, as she kneels on the seat with her dirty shoe soles turned out?" Then he swept the entire car interior with a look of disgust, and sighed: "Well, well, well, what does

it matter if a poor tired workingman stands on his feet all night?"

"No more room inside!" shouted the conductor as the car stopped at the next street crossing.

"That's always the way, when poor working folks are homeward bound," said a voice among the passenger crowd, and the black whiskered bricklayer smiled and nodded his agreement.

At that moment a well dressed seaman rose and offered the black whiskered growler his seat.

"Oh no, thank you," said the bricklayer, "I guess you've paid your ten cents, too?"

"That I have," answered the seaman, "and I have also toiled a full day, but, I believe my legs are stronger than yours."

The elder man doffed his hat and took the proffered seat. He opened his snuff box, took a pinch out of it, and became quite talkative for the rest of his ride. "It'll come to it! It'll come to it, that the working man will have to take charge of affairs both here and there in the community. Then *we* will ride home *sitting* every night, and the white collared snobs

can *stand* for a change. Won't that be fine, my little lady?"he said with ironical snear, turning to the woman who a moment before had tried to humble him. The woman blushed angrily. At the next stop she picked up her little daughter and hustled off the car, giving the talkative bricklayer a glance that was ominous as a snake bite as she fled past him.

"Little but sharp, isn't she?" he shouted so that all in the car could hear him. "In the days of the horse car," he continued to brawl, "they had to stop and start wherever the likes of her wished to get on or alight, and the poor beasts had to jerk and back and tear in their shackles. Now, at least, there are regular stopping places. Well, in those days—in the horse car days, I rode once. The conductor rang his bell to stop. The car stopped and remained still for some time. Everybody wondered who they were waiting for. Bye and bye a huge dromedary—a top-classer—staggered in. The whole car shook as he planted his flesh-magazine on the step, and trembled pitifully as he seated himself inside. He puffed and wheezed so that the

hair stood on end on the heads of the rest of us. Beside him sat a little tailor, who was crowded almost to the point of going breathless. He became angry. Besides, he was in a hurry to get home. "Here ought to be charged fare by weight," he groaned.

"The dromedary calmly pulled his spectacle from their mooring inside his coat, placed them aristocratically on his nose, and sent a dagger-like side glance down at the huddled tailor. 'Then you would need pity,' he sneared, 'For it would hardly pay to stop the car for such a lightweight as you'!"

The bricklayer had actually amused most of his fellow passengers by that story. He himself betrayed no amusement, however, but eyed his audience sarcastically to see how the tale had appealed.

The well-dressed seaman, who had tendered him his seat, was apparently approaching his getting-off place. He moved toward the door of the car. As he did so he gazed back at the bricklayer, half earnestly, half jestingly, and said: "If you are just as dilligent at your work as you are in your speech, you are certainly an ex-

ceptional workman!" The babbler lost his gift of speech for a moment and stared a bit embarrassed after the departing fellow passenger.

"There you, Bennick! That seaman called your bluff, didn't he?" laughed one of his companions, inferring that the remark had hit well at the bluster of an underrate toiler. The car stopped. The well-dressed seaman alighted. As he did so he became aware of a young woman who was just about to board the car. His pulse quickened. He seemed to recognize *her*. She, too, became nonplussed, when she beheld *him*, and almost let the car start off without her.

"I believe it was *she!*" thought he.

"I'm sure it was *he!*" thought she.

He was Alfred Brandt. She was Fanny Landers. Eight to nine years had passed since they first met at the gate of the country churchyard near his boyhood home. She was now a teacher in a school in the big city. He was first mate on board the steamer "Norden". She was perhaps a little plumper in figure and face, but otherwise so like that beautiful

angel in black—as he remembered her in that time gone by. He, too, looked maturer. He had grown a mustache, and he carried himself with greater manliness. His hair had grown darker. But the eyes! Her eyes and his eyes! There is something very mysterious about eyes! They change little or not at all. And it is they, these mirrors of the soul, that give the face its deepest and most lasting characteristics. Yes, he felt certain that they were the same eyes, that it was the same glance, as in the bygone time by the cemetery gate.

No wonder that Alfred Brandt stood motionless a long while and stared after the trolley car. She had so long lived in his thoughts and ruled his ambitions, that she was one with him in every noble utterance of his life. And now he had been so nearly within reach of her—and there she sped away aboard a trolley car!

Nor less the wonder that Fanny Landers remained standing on the car platform, peering back into the darkness, her heart beating very quickly, her cheeks burning with blushes. Often had she thought of

the youth who in that long ago had opened the cemetery gate for her and her sister and mother, and whom she had subsequently seen in the churchyard the following Sunday morning, and again at the meeting the same day in the little mission house. His eyes had told her an inaudible story. They had awakened in her strange feelings and queer dreams. Although her life had been full of duties and worthwhile things, she had never been able to entirely set aside the memories of these feelings, these dreams. She wondered why this was. She did not know him. Perhaps they had nothing in common. But it is with the things of the inner life, of the spirit, as it is in nature. A seed can be carried by the wind from afar. No one notices it. It falls in some hidden place and is covered up. But it has potential life in its heart. It begins to penetrate to the surface, it sprouts and grows, and in the years to come it manifests itself a beautiful tree, that in time is strong enough to cope with the very wind that planted it, and to give out of

beauty and shelter to all who will behold it.

Fanny Landers was comely. And she was rich. Surely she had had her share of wooers. But no one had ever touched her woman's heart with a sympathy such as that which she divined in the glance of him by the cemetery gate. When she thought of it, it almost frightened her. As she wandered back in memory to that peculiar incident, she felt as if something had arisen from her father's grave and strung a delicate thread between her fate and the youth's. Surely it could only have been her supersensitive imagination! True, she had read somewhere about the migration of souls, reincarnation, and other such Hindoo and theosophic mystics. Perhaps all this had played unduly upon her fantasy. She could, however, not allow herself to believe them. Her thoughts refused to harbor anything so chaotic and weird.

Perhaps the main reason for not being able to dismiss him from her thoughts was a dream that she had had the night before her first meeting with him. She had fallen alseep that evening thinking of her

departed father. In her thoughts of him she had wondered, too, about her own future, and she had prayed God to lead her through life, so that His will would rule at every turn of events and in all her undertakings. Fallen asleep she dreamt that she was in the woods picking her father's favorite flowers—the lily of the valley. She wanted to place these on his grave. He had often told her, when he lived, that his love for the lily had come to him as an inheritance from his mother. He could make her so happy by bringing her a handful of lily of the valley from the woodlands and marshlands, where they bloomed in spring and early summer, some years in greater profusion than others. And every time in his manhood life that someone brought him lily of the valley, it gave him a review of his boyhood days and enthused his soul as nothing else. Now she, his daughter, who had loved him so and tried to make him happy, wanted to deck his final resting place with the flowers he had loved so well. The fields were beautiful, the woods so green and fresh. As she hastened toward the

dell, where she knew the lily grew luxuriously, she seemed to meet a number of her father's childhood friends—many of those he had spoken to her about. And they were all anxious to show her to the place where the lilies were most numerous. They covered the ground like soft white snow, she thought, as she plucked and plucked and plucked. But on her way to the grave with the flowers she met her father! He led by the hand a young man whom she never before had seen. She handed her father the flowers. He graciously accepted the bouquet, but parted it, and gave half to the youth who was with him. And as he did so he said: "Now children, betake yourself to church!" Just then Fanny awoke.

"A strange dream!" she thought. No wonder she stopped and gazed, wide-eyed, by the cemetery gate, when she beheld in flesh-and-blood, the youth she had seen by her father's side in the dream! However, she had pledged herself not to tell anyone about the dream until she was sure there might be a meaning to it. Her father had often dreamed dreams that

came true. He believed that God sometime revealed His will in that way.

And now, this late fall evening on the trolley car platform, Fanny Landers retraced in memory the dream and all that had subsequently taken place to point toward an interpretation of it. How strange that they now merely should have gotten a glimpse of one another! But it had been sufficient for her to be certain that it was *he!* She never, never could mistake or evade *his* glance! What could *he* be doing in the city?

Whatever she hitherto had thought concerning any possibility of a fate linked close to his, she *now* began to think seriously about it. When she met him the first time, she realized that he was not a man of culture and refinement. And she felt compelled to think that she must have been mistaken as to his identity with the youth of the dream. And yet, there had been times, too, when she had recalled that her own father was of humble birth and in early life had lacked the advantages of culture. He had worked his way ahead and gained all these blessings with years

of honest effort, and in time become one of the most intelligent and able business men in the country. Nor had he ever been disappointing in his social life. But now —after this evening's glimpse of *him*—the youth of the dream—how well she could see that he had risen above his early status in life, had made good in the struggle for better things.

V.

Letters and Poems.

HOW mysterious is human life! And the human heart! And the little world of the individual, where often there is an echo from the vast unknown, weirdly, sadly moaning, like the murmur in a seashell! For every human being carries within—in the depths of himself—a miniature world, a wonderful world of never ceasing thought, ever vibrant feeling, enmeshed by temptations, haunted by forebodings, illumined by hopes, that can never be known entirely by any other human being. Some folks find it easy to confide in other, to tell, to reveal. They are like crystal bottles, through which one readily can discern the color of the contents. Every shade of thought can be detected. Others are like bottles of opaque glass. One cannot behold on the outside what the contents be like. These folks go about their business, well knowing their own aims, but keeping them secret from the rest of the world. Yet, even the most

open-hearted and tell-tale humans at times have their mysteries, their secrets, that only they themselves can know and understand.

As there is always motion in the atmosphere, surrounding us in the natural world, that cloud and sunshine, shadow and light, may interchange, so there exists for the human spirit something movable and changing, a kind of shifting panorama, never resting in its course, not even when man sleeps. In sleep it takes domain within the dream, and many times the dream touches the deepest secrets and reveals them again in memory to the waking soul.

Fanny Landers certainly did not wish anyone to look into her innermost thoughts, as she walked homeward from the trolley line, that autumn evening in the big city. Her emotions rose and fell like the mercury in a thermometer, variously and hastily exposed to draughts of heat and cold. Her thoughts moved rapidly and irrelevantly. And all because of that sudden meeting with *him!* She had been nearly tempted to ride back again in the direction of the point where

she had boarded the car. But she managed to remember that her mother, who was not very well, would wait and wonder if she delayed.

She and her mother lived in a cozy apartment in the extreme eastern part of the town. They had one servant, who had been with the family for twenty years or more. As Fanny neared home the lamps in the apartment glowed invitingly through the window. And when she crossed the threshold, how warm and hospitable and home-like everything seemed, with the winter rugs all laid and the curtains hung.

"I'm glad you are home, Fanny," greeted her mother. "Wish you could have come earlier. We have had a caller this evening, a young sea-faring man, who brought greetings from Elizabeth and Stanley. He waited quite a while for you. But he had to leave before you came."

"A young sea-farer, did you say? How did he look!"

Fanny's mother described him.

Fanny blushed a bit, for she recognized him immediately.

"Indeed it was a pity Miss Fanny was

not at home!" added the old servant, who was as one of the family, and always expressed herself freely in matters of importance. She had a keen eye, too, and saw back of things, and detected motives, and drew her own conclusions!

"Why, Anna, what makes you say so?" asked Fanny laughingly.

"Because he was just such a person as Miss Fanny would like!"

"How can you be so sure of that, Anna?"

"I can't be sure, of course, but I *think* you would."

"Well, I asked him to, in fact, invited him to come again tomorrow evening about this time. He said that that would delight him, and expressed the hope that his duties would allow him the time off for the visit," replied Fanny's mother.

"It was so interesting," she continued, "to hear him speak of the seamen's mission work in England. And how he did praise Stanley and Elizabeth! It made me rejoice to hear him say such fascinating things about them. Evidently, he knows them well, has been in their home

at times, and is familiar with their work at the mission. And he is a Christian, too! Indeed, Fanny, it was a distinct loss to you that you did not reach home earlier! And there, on your writing table, is a letter for you from Stanley. I've been very curious to open it. Perhaps it tells something about the visitor we've had? But, of course, I never open your letters!"

Fanny glanced at the writing table. She crossed the room hurriedly, picked up the letter, and scanned the handwriting on the envelope. Yes, it was Stanley's handwriting. She could distinguish his writing among thousands. It was distinctly characteristic of him.

She ripped open the envelope and was soon deeply engrossed in the contents.

"Can't you read aloud?" asked her mother.

Fanny's heart beat rapidly. Somehow she could hardly risk her voice to reply for fear it might betray her emotions. She excused herself as best she could. Privately she read:

Dear Sister.

I must send you a little note of thanks, very hearty thanks, for your recent letter and for the gifts to our boys. I believe Elizabeth has recently written you about our pre-Christmas entertainment for some of them, and the distribution of the gifts. So you will forgive me if I do not go into detail about it, knowing, too, how very busy I am.

You are wonderfully good, Fanny, to think of us and our sea-faring boys. They were so pleased to receive the gifts you sent. Many of them will spend their Christmas at sea. The woollen stockings were especially welcome. It gave them a double thrill of joy to know that loving hands in their homeland had knit them. And the books in their native language! How they do enjoy them! I saw many a tear in their eyes as they accepted the gifts. Who can tell what memories of home and mother, of the Christmas anticipations of their childhood days, and many other tender recollections, these gifts helped to bring to mind?

Home ties are not easily broken nor forgotten. How well for us humans that it is so! In that tender rift of the soul we have a beautiful point of contact for our Christmas endeavor. Our mission work among the seamen, like all labor of uplift among mankind, has its difficulties and its discouragements. We need these times of tender touches to help us reach the hearts of our boys. Much happens in our work that strains our patience and our faith and love.

Isn't it strange how man is prone to sink down, to fall? Is it the gravity of depraved human nature that pulls downward? The man who wants to turn away from evil and become good, must rise and climb with much effort and by constant struggle, if he would not again be downed. Bad habits pull at him. And many weeds keep springing up, in his soul and without it, to ensnare his struggling steps and hold him down. What faith it takes, Fanny, to keep on helping, to keep on inspiring!

Lest you suspect that I am growing hopelessly pessimistic, let me hasten to

tell you that we have also had much joy in our work. Recently we have been gladdened and greatly encouraged by association with a young poet! He is a captain, shipping as first mate aboard a large steamer, that has put into this port on several trips. Elizabeth claims that *you* know him—in a way. You met him, years ago, one evening shortly after your father's death. You met him in the churchyard, I believe, and later saw him in the mission house at a seamen's service. Elizabeth teasingly says that you became very much infatuated with him, although you have never exchanged a word with him. She says you have often spoken of him since. Well, be that as it may, I shall refrain from teasing you about falling in love with utter strangers! But I do wish to tell you something about *him! He* is very much in love with *you!* He can hardly think of anything else! He dreams and yearns incessantly for you, his unknown angel! And I believe that he *suffers* in his love. Because I want you to realize how much he thinks of you, I am enclosing in this letter a bit of evidence

in his own handwriting. *He* is the author of the verses, and *you* are the inspirer. He does not know that I am sending them to you. Indeed, I do not believe that he knows I have them.

It has come about in this way: He wrote a number of little poems of Christian content, some of which I deem have real poetic value. He left them with me when he went to sea recently, asking me to read them over more carefully and criticise them for him. When he returns he will want to know my verdict! This I was delighted to promise him. Among the poem I found these that I am enclosing with my letter to you. They had certainly slipped in among the others without his knowledge and intention, for he is very sensitive about his innermost thoughts. Daringly, I am exposing them to you! They give you a better glimpse of his heart's desire than I could write you. That *you* are the heroine of his songs, I am convinced. For he has visited us often and talked so generously and beautifully about his past life. He dates his conversation to a living faith in Jesus

Christ from that evening when he beheld you for the first time by the cemetery gate. His happiness was bound up in your eyes! He has never for a moment doubted the power of regeneration that gleamed to him in the tenderness of your eyes. Perhaps Elizabeth has already told you this? Elizabeth is very found of him! She would be delighted to have him for a brother! I have investigated him a bit. His superiors and his companions on the steamer speak of him in glowing terms of commendation. Everyone likes him for his staunch Christian character and his charm of personality.

And I must tell you one more incident concerning his affection for you. One afternoon, on a recent visit in our port, I suddenly came upon him as he sat beside Elizabeth's writing table in the mission reading room. He sat there holding in his hand that very fine photograph of you that Elizabeth adorns her table with. And tears were streaming down his cheeks. Need I tell you that I made my exit from the reading room as hastily and unnotice-

able as possible, leaving him undisturbed at his worship?

While I do not think he has had the advantage of much schooling, he is well read. He uses correct language and speaks fluently on many topics. His appearance is always that of a cultured gentleman. Best of all, he *is* a *Christian* gentleman. His frank and kindly face bespeak all this. He has remarkably fine eyes!

I agree with Elizabeth. I wouldn't mind a bit if you could manage to love him! Then some day he may become my brother-in-law!

Now, Fanny dear, please do not consider this a match-maker's business letter! It is not intended in any such meaning. God's will be done in everything.

Many hearty greetings accompany this letter to you and mother from Elizabeth, who always makes me the happiest man on earth and helps me untiringly in the work, and from me, your affectionate brother,

Stanley.

P. S. Please return the poems to me promptly. This little escapade must remain a secret between you and me! I

sent you the originals so that you also might appraise his handwriting. Please do not delay in returning the manuscript!

You may soon have the pleasure of meeting the author. He has sailed for your port, and has promised us to call on you and your mother, to give you our greetings in person. S.

* * *

Fanny could not describe the feelings that surged in her soul as she read her brother-in-law's letter. Her curiosity concerning the poems and the poet knew no bounds. Was it because *she* was more deeply interested in *him* than in any other human being? Or was is because of that natural and cherished weakness common to mankind,—the eagerness for sympathy from others, especially that sympathy which expresses iself in praise of us? Fanny Landers, too, was always conscious of that dream she had shortly after her dear father's demise, and of the strange coincident in which this man appeared upon the horizon of the real.

How odd love is! How timid and shy, almost afraid of the light, as it begins to

unite two hearts! It is a safe wager that friendship has turned into love-lane, when one observes two souls, who had formerly been able to associate with frankness and freedom and unconcern, begin to be shy and uneasy in their attitude toward one another as they mingle with the crowd.

Fanny was not young. She had passed the first youthfulness. And she knew life's earnestness and the need and power of love in human relations. But it could be said of her that she had never abused the grand passion. Never had she flirted, or jilted, or treated lightly and jestingly the most beautiful of all life's gifts. For no other man had she felt the depth and beauty of emotion that she had for the unknown seaman. That her love for him was spiritual, could not be denied. Fanny felt that her sympathy for him had risen in the memories she had of her dear father, and rested in the fact that her father convincingly had impressed upon her the necessity and privilege of letting GOD lead in every event of life. In the days immediately following her father's death, Fanny's supersensitive soul had been like a wide open

camera, continually snapping impressions. The young seaman came in her path in that psychological moment, and *his* image fastened itself indelibly on the retina of her innermost life. No matter how filled her life later became with other interests, interests that steadied and matured her, *he* remained. And around him she wove a framework of beautiful dreams, like garlands of perennial flowers.

Many are the human hearts that need to shape their ideals in concrete pictures in order to aspire and be happy. They must know their ideal incarnate in order to fathom life and love. Often the ideal is personified only in their imagination, and becomes in their minds a perfect saint, so worthy their deepest adoration that they find it difficult to love the folks they meet in *real life.* The "Unknown God" had its unimpeachable charm in the thoughts of the Athenians. And there are like "gods" in the thoughts of most lovers!

"Stanley and Elizabeth send you their fond greetings," said Fanny, looking up at her mother. "They are working hard, as usual, but are very happy and hopeful in

their toil. They also mention this sea-captain. Stanley seems to be very fond of him, and because he admires him has asked him to call on us when he comes to our city." As she spoke, Fanny tucked the letter into the folds of her blouse.

"Thanks, Fanny dear," said her mother. "Was that all the letter said? Seems to me it was a very *thick* missive! Have you really had time to read it through already?"

"Not all of it," said Fanny blushingly. "That is—I have read the letter, but there are some poems enclosed with it that I have not yet perused."

"Some of Stanley's creations?"

"You're getting a bit curious, aren't you mother?"

"Oh no, Fanny, but I believe you are becoming secretive!"

"I don't mean to be, mother dear," laughed Fanny, blushing so profusely that her mother could not help noticing it. "But I want to read them through at my leisure, and then I shall let you share them."

At that moment Anna announced that tea was served. After tea and the customary prayertime and Scripture reading, Fanny's mother bade her and old Anna good-night. She was tired, she said, and wished to retire early.

Fanny did not delay long in seeking the haven of her own room. She was unusually cautious to close her door, and even turned the key in the lock. She lost no time in pulling the papers from their hiding place in her blouse. With an affectionate pat she smoothed out the sheets, containing the verses. How manly and elegant his handwriting! The top sheet revealed a long composition entitled: "My Star." Fanny began to read:

"Night hangs her veil in somber folds low o'er the restless deep,
And thru its haze-wov'n meshes little blinking star-eyes peep,
While sailcraft, birdlike, glide and plash, then heave and sigh and moan,
As sailors peer at distant lights, and dream fond dreams of home.

Swift rush the waves aquarr'ling against my trusty bark,
That steams to sea arocking in the wind on billows dark!
And on her spacious deck I pace, my soul locked in strange dreams—
Wild dreams, that like the restless deep, no peace can find, it seems.

I dream a Star is beckoning me, enticing me away!
My thoughts tear lose, wing up, and soar to find her, and to say:
Deep in my heart, a sacred place, a talisman I keep,
A vision fair, an image pure, at which none else may peep!

But t h r e e the times I've seen your face in all the years I've spent!
Yet, untold happiness and joy y o u to my life have meant!
And so each day I humbly pray: 'Dear God, in heav'n above,
Grant me another time of bliss when I may see my—Love!'

How dare I dream that you'd be mine, if you to wed were free?
Bold are such thoughts that haunt and bless and buttress against me!
Yet, speed the day when I may turn from sailing seas to shore,
To plead with you, and make you mine for time and ever more!

But what if you already, dear, should be another's
bride?
How could I bear to hear it, and such cruel fate
abide?
For then the joy of sailing seas forever would be
o'er,
And life for me grow cold and gray and starless
ever more!

I know I dream too boldly, forgetting humble birth,
My heritage's plebeian—of the lowly of the earth.
And he who'd win you, must he be rich and cul-
tured and renowned?
And surely, too, great virtues in him must needs
abound.

Ah, as I probe and test myself, I feel how short I
fall
In worthiness. But then, ah me, why think of
you at all?
Why beats my heart so enviously of him who'd
venture free?
Why dare I even dream that you shall deign to
think of me?

There comes a thought, consoling, sweet, that God
Himself stepped low—
To earth He came to share our woes, our hopes
and fears to know.
Perhaps you have His Spirit meek? And Christ-
like heart to feel
How true my love for you and deep; and kindly
with me deal?

That thought both makes me glad and good. It fortifies my soul!
It helps me build my castles fair, and hopeful of my goal,
As sailing o'er the deep, blue sea, I plan and work and pray,
And feel God's providence and love embrace me on my way.

Farewell, my Star, my watch is o'er, dawn smiles in eastern skies;
The lanterns of the night burn out, the mists begin to rise.
But in my heart undying lights its vigils never cease,
For you, my Star, the keeper are of all my hope and peace'!"

* * *

Many a maiden's heart has pitter-pattered at less melodious serenades. For there is something strangely exhilerating about being the object of homage and song! To Fanny Landers came tears. How romantic he was! How deeply he must have felt the emotion he had written! Again that long-ago dream came to Fanny's mind. Perhaps, after all, this seaman was the one God wished her to join fate with?

Perhaps, were she to read on—read the other two poems—the beautiful impression of this one that she just had read might fade, might tarnish. Indeed, Fanny began to wish that the envelope had contained only that poem,—no letter, nothing more. But her woman's curiosity persisted! Carefully she spread out before her the second paper. It bore the title: "I'm Longing."

"A longing intense grips my soul this dark night,
Strange thoughts stir and strive in my breast!
Like shadows they creep, and challenge the light,
Like billows they roll and struggle, and smite,
Nor grant me contentment nor rest!

A while since, the sunset with glory did light
In hues iridescent the cloud,
And kiss the blue seacrests a silent good-night,
And smile on the wind to ease in its flight,
Nor whistle its evening song loud!

Then came the long shadows, and oh, how they grew,
And coaxed up a mist from the deep,
That hemmed in our bark and eclipsed from our view
All else on the sea, as around us it drew
A magical vestment of sleep.

But on the ship's deck my vigil I keep,
And scan the wide skies for a star!
As I peer thru the haze, weird dreams come and sweep,
Encircling my soul, and make me sigh deep,
And spirit me off, away far!

They take me adventuring! 'Ah, where is my Star?
Why am I sighing, why should I long?
Why the illusions that beckon me far?
Why not be content with things as they are?
With the sea and the mariner's son?'

Our Father in heaven, to Thee my soul turns,
Oh grant that my wild dreams may cease!
For the peace, Thou wouldst give, my restless life yearns,
For the joys, Thou canst grant, my longing heart burns,
Oh give me contentment and peace!"

* * *

This song did rob Fanny of some of that deep feeling that had gripped her as she read the first poem. This was so melancholy, she thought, and breathed in the end a sigh of resignation to what *he* seemed to regard as an inevitable fate —that he must somehow free himself of

the desire to win her. It impressed her like snow on a rose. But then, woman often *feels* so intensily about things that she fails to *think* through a situation and reach out for reasons. Had he not, in the poem she read first, expressed his fears concerning her demands upon his worthiness in the scales of birth and culture? Perhaps *there* lay the reason for his prayer in this song—that he might have contentment and peace, power to find happiness in his own sphere, at his work, and among his own kind.

Fanny felt that she simply must read also the third bit of verse. It was called: "An Evening Song."

"Lord, who dwelleth in the heavens,
  Whither songs of glory rise—
Like the swelling tides of oceans,
  Waves of sound that cleave the skies,—
Wilt Thou listen to my singing,
  Humbly from my soul's depth winging,
Seeking Thee, All-Good and Wise?

Lonely o'er the seas I'm faring,
  Where I hear no church bells ring,
Nor Thy children's voices bringing
  Praises to Thee as they sing.

Yet, Thy stars above me glory,
  Tell me Thy love's blessed story,
And Thy peace unto me bring!

May I in these hours of evening,
  Feel Thy guiding Spirit near.
For I need Thee in the gloaming,
  As thru shadows I must steer,—
Need to feel myself abiding,
  In Thy care securely hiding
From all dangers and all fear.

Since the day I gave my promise,
  Thine to be with all my life,
I have felt the deep, deep yearning—
  Ever present, ever rife—
For Thy loving, patient leading,
  Felt the need Thy voice of heeding,
'Mid the world's loud din and strife.

Yet, my thought have oft been truant,
  Drifting uncontrolled about.
And my heart's been discontended,
  And my faith not always stout!
In the midst of all Thy grace, Lord,
  In the sunlight of Thy ways, Lord,
Yet I dream and sigh and doubt!

There's a human heart that draws me,
  Beckon me from far away.
Wilt Thou lead me, Lord, and help me,
  Lest I lose the course and stray?

For that shoreline knows no ending,
  Where Elysian lights are blending,—
Like a mirage on love's way!

Shall I bless the day I met her—
  Was made prisoner by her eye?
For that day my soul awakened,
  And to Thee, my Lord, drew nigh.
Fair the gaze was, sweet and kindly,
  Made me hope, and cherish blindly
Right to love her till I die!

As the compass points to northward,
  As the flower seeks the sun,
So by nature turns my longing
  To her heart, my cherished one.
Shall on earth again I meet her?
  Dare with love's glad troth to greet her?
Or must we wait till heaven is won?

Lord, which way Thy hand shall lead me,
  May Thy will in all I see?
'Twas Thy grace and Thy salvation
  That thru her did speak to me,
Lay within the glance she gave me,
  'Roused my soul in love, to save me.
Keep me, Lord, e'er close to Thee!"

* * *

Never had Fanny read poetry with such mingled feelings of ecstasy and sadness as she experienced in reading these verses

by *him*. And that *she* was the inspirer, was hardly fathomable. Not only did the songs breathe in praise of her, in longing for her love, but they also praised the heavenly Father, the Creator of human longing and the satisfaction as well. Womanlike, she felt flattered that poetry should have been born in her honor. But this poet seemed to live solely by the thought of her! How humble he was, too! So unlike the modern man of the world, who seems to think that every woman admires him and is ready to worship him at beck and call!

Fanny felt almost adventuresome, as she retired to rest that night. It was a novel experience—this revelation from the unknown. She felt somewhat as Columbus must have felt when he spied land in a new world! She knew that something new, something wonderful, was about to happen in her own little world. Although she was looking into the future without any tangible reason to believe that the man, who so ardently had sung to her in poetry, would ever come to propose marriage to her, she could not help wonder-

ing what her mother would do if she did marry! For she could never bear to leave her mother. But, of course, if she were to marry a seaman, it would work no odds to have her mother live with her! And old Anna! Her thoughts became enthusiastic about it all. She began to wonder where they would live, when the wedding would take place, and many other such happy details of a romance like hers!

Then she laughed out loud! "How silly of me," she thought. "He has not proposed. I have not even met him yet! When he sees me again, his love may chill! Maybe I could not love him. Dreams, letter, poems, are one thing: reality may be very different."

There are many causes for insomnia! The active conscious mind is not easily overpowered by the subconscious, even though the body is yawning for sleep. Such was Fanny's experience this night. She could not sleep. After tossing restlessly awhile on her bed, she arose, lit a light, and took her Bible from the table. As she did so she prayed a little silent prayer, asking God to lead her vision to a

verse of counsel in His Word. She opened the Bible and her gaze fell immediately upon a verse in the Thirty-second Psalm. It was a passage that she had underscored many years ago: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee." It was the memory verse that her dear father had given her on her confirmation day. He had repeated it, too, as he talked with her during his last illness—talked with her about his going away to the better land, and she had wept so bitterly and would not be comforted. How like her father to give her a memory verse like that! He had asked her to underline it both with red and black ink. And he had reminded her that, no matter what might befall her in life, God and His promises were ever steadfast and trustworthy. It was hitching her chariot to a star, she thought, to find this beautiful Scripture line right now. Her turbulent thoughts seemed to harness into order. Her surging emotions, that had resembled a stormtossed sea, or a quivering craft upon troubled waves, now seemed to calm,

and to find a sheltered haven. Her dreams stepped ashore, as it were, and found firm ground, found reality and peace. She felt the deep significance of a life surrendered entirely to God as she softly said to herself: "I am in God's hand, body and soul. I ask nothing more than that His will be done in my life. This is my fervent prayer. And then my fate is no longer of my own volition; it is God's will." She returned to bed and was soon fast asleep.

The following day Fanny attended to her duties at school, and hurried home early in the afternoon. On the way she bought some flowers, and some bright colored autumn leaves with which to enhance the already very cozy atmosphere of the Landers' living room.

"Would he come?" was a thought she could not help but entertain continually. For whether he would or not was conditional upon his being able to get away from his work!

Fanny spent extra time upon her toilet that evening. She was ostensibly anxious to look her best. Even old Anna observed the fussing, and teasingly remarked: "Just

as I expected! Miss Fanny is already in love!"

Twilight came. Fanny lit the lamps earlier than usual. She looked intermittently at the clock. How slowly the time ticks on its round when one is waiting, is in suspense for the happening of an anticipated event! How quiet the house was! The slightest noise startled her. Was that knock on their door? No, it was not! "I believe I am nervous," she thought. "If I only had not read those poems, I would not have felt so peculiarly about it all! Now I shall be so awkward and self-conscious when I meet him."

"Perhaps you'd like to read those poems to me now, Fanny dear?" asked the mother, as if she wished to give Fanny some occupation while they awaited the arrival of their guest.

"Oh mother, I neither can nor would like to read them just now."

"Or Stanley's letter?"

"No, mother, I simply can't now—tomorrow . . ."

"But I am truly very curious, Fanny.

There must be some profound secret in that letter!"

Fanny was saved the necessity of answering this question, for the door bell sounded. Anna went into the corridor to let the guest in.

"Oh," sighed Fanny to herself. "If only I had not read those verses! I'll be so stupidly unnatural in my behavior—I know I will!"

But it was not *he* who had come! It was an old lady, long a friend of the family, who, so far as Fanny was concerned, was never more unwelcome than to-night. She was relentlessly curious about everything and everybody. She literally seemed to "smell" the tracks of something eventful. She was always on hand when news was being doled out, and happenings taking place. To keep her out of ones secrets was a task as impossible as keeping the cat away from the canary, whose cage has been placed on the floor!

"Good evening, folks!" she ejaculated as she hustled into the spacious and pretty living-room. "My, how you have lighted up and decorated your abode this evening!

You must have been expecting me!" Her voice was crisp with humor as she spoke her greetings.

Fanny's response was rather indifferent. Her mother greeted the worthy lady more cordially, and bid her have the most comfortable seat in the room. Old Anna suppressed an understanding grin, and thought: "What a good time Miss Fanny will have now!"

Before long the door bell rang again. Fanny could hardly repress her restlessness as she strained her ears for the sound of the voice at the door. Yes, it was a man's voice! Anna announced: "Captain Brandt!" All eyes immediately sought the living-room doorway. But the lady visitor managed simultaneously to direct one of hers toward Fanny. In a moment a tall, handsome man in seaman's uniform entered. His fine, open-souled countenance shone with pleasure. Fanny inventoried his appearance at a glance. His hair and mustache were dark; his brow high and broad; his keen blue eyes bespoke candor and kindly humor.

The captain greeted Fanny's mother with

much delight, and was then introduced to Fanny and to old Mrs. Hagerflykt. He greeted Fanny very heartily from Stanley and Elizabeth, and with a few words revealed his joy to be friend with them. He also expressed his delight over the opportunity they had given him to carry good wishes to mother and sister. The conversation became animated. For there was so much to relate concerning Stanley and Elizabeth and their mission work in England.

"You will do us the honor to take tea with us, will you not, Captain Brandt?" asked Fanny's mother.

The captain arose and bowed and thanked her most heartily. Indeed, it was he who felt honored!

Fanny poured the tea. As she passed the cup to him, her hand trembled. She felt how he glanced at her now and then, yes, often! But when she would dare to cast a look across the table to him, he very kindly turned his attention to her mother, or to the old lady Hagerflykt. It seemed as though he purposely tried to avoid her gaze. Was he shy? Fanny did

not join very freely in the conversation. She preferred to watch the others and listen to their witticisms. Captain Brandt seemed to know just how to entertain old ladies! "What a truly sympathetic, kindly nature he has!" thought Fanny. "So intelligent, so witty, so at ease!" She managed to ask him a question or two. But they were very ordinary, uninteresting ones. And when he turned to her as he answered them, their eyes met—just had to meet! "The same mild, beautiful eyes!" thought he. "The same attraction in his gaze!" thought she.

She hardly dared to meet his gaze again during the teatime. She could feel, however, how his glance appraised her time and again during the meal. It seemed as if he were taking "snapshot pictures" of her, that he might later develope them in his mind, and view her at various angles in his memory.

How quickly the evening sped! It was nearly ten o'clock when Captain Brandt commenced to bid adieu. As he rose to bid Fanny's mother good-night and thank her for the delightful evening he spent in

her sanctuary, he spied the piano in one corner of the room.

"Please forgive me," he exclaimed. "Perhaps I am asking too big a favor, but surely, Miss Landers, you are a musician, accomplished like your sister. Perhaps you would grant me a little song as a memory gem from this happy evening?"

Fanny blushed.

"I do play a little," she confessed, "but I have not a beautiful voice, such as my sister has."

"Oh, you both play and sing well," said the lady visitor. "Sea-faring men seldom hear singing by woman's voice. Surely, you will not refuse Captain Brandt such a delight!"

Fanny shook her head.

"Forgive me, if my request is untimely. The muse does not always feel attuned to music at our bidding!" said the captain, smiling good naturedly.

But Fanny had already opened a hymn-book. She seated herself at the piano and began singing:

"Hold Thou my hand, I am so weak and helpless,
Alone I fear to travel on my way.
Hold Thou my hand, O gracious, loving Jesus,
For by Thy side I'll neither faint nor stray.

Hold Thou my hand, keep me in close communion
With Thee, my hope, my light, my joy in life!
Hold Thou my hand, keep me from stumbling, falling;
Lift my desires above earth's sordid strife.

Hold Thou my hand, when sorrows overtake me,
And hearten with Thy love my worried soul.
When Thou art near, no night is dark and hopeless—
Thou showest me the distant sunlit goal!"

* * *

Fanny sang naturally and feelingful. It touched the captain's heart. He was "weak and helpless!" There were tears in his eyes as he thanked her. "I shall take the words and music of that hymn with me over the seas," he said. "It is a sacred privilege to have the Master hold us by the hand—whether we are ashore or faring over the ocean."

"Will we not have the pleasure of again seeing you while your ship is in port, Cap-

tain Brandt?" asked Fanny's mother. Her voice was most cordial, and she extended him a hearty invitation to repeat his visit. Fanny seconded her mother's words by giving him the most heartfelt, kindly look she was capable of. The old lady Hagerflykt, whose eyes were keen as the seagull's, did not fail to notice this.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to come again," said Captain Brandt. "But, alas, I must accompany my ship to sea to-morrow!" He thanked his hostesses for their hospitality, and promised to carry their many greetings to Stanley and Elizabeth, whom he hoped to meet again upon the arrival of his ship in England. He pressed Fanny's hand very firmly and tenderly, she thought, as he bid her good-bye. And looking straight into her eyes with his kindly, eloquent gaze, he said: "I did so much appreciate your song!"

The next moment he had gone out into the night. Mrs. Hagerflykt soon bade good-night also and departed to her apartment in the building across the street.

"Well, Fanny, didn't you like the captain

very much?" said her mother as soon as she and Fanny were alone.

"Yes, mother, I do like him."

"But you were so silent all evening?"

"I'll tell you why, mother, if you are not too sleepy to listen. Would you like to hear Stanley's letter now? And the poems?"

"Indeed, I would!"

Fanny disappeared for a moment into her own room, then returned with the letter and its appendicies. She read them to her mother, betraying, in spite of her will not to, the pent up emotion in her soul.

When she had finished reading, she gazed at her mother to see what impression it all had made upon her. Her mother had covered her eyes with her handkerchief. She was weeping!

"Mother, dear, are you grieved?" said Fanny, drawing her mother tenderly to her bosom. "Perhaps you think that I might leave you, might want to go away with him? I would not want to do that. But now you realize why I was so silent during the evening. And then that curious old

Mrs. Hagerflykt, too, had to come and observe it all!"

"Dear child," said Fanny's mother, "I am not grieved. I am glad! One of my dearest wishes has always been that you should marry—should marry a good man. And I have been grieved when you have insisted that woman can fight her own battles with life and be just as happy without the men. Such argument is not impulsed by your natural cravings. And the lonely life of the single woman can never be happy. Youth and strength and beauty and resiliency are fleeting. It is not easy to live alone when old age overtakes one. If I had not had you to comfort me in my widowhood, I would have had a very sad time indeed."

"Mother, do you mean you wish to get rid of me? And I love you so devotedly?"

"Of course not, my child! How can you think such thoughts? You misunderstand me! I am frail and have not many years to live. To know that you were well and happily married, like Elizabeth, would make me feel happy. I have often prayed God

that you might find the right and good man, Fanny.

"But when you do marry, be a helpmeet to your husband. Try to understand him. Do not treat him as I treated your father during the first years of our married life. I was a spoiled child in my father's home, —an only child, you know. And I had not the ideals to make my married life a truly beautiful partnership with your father. I have regretted it many times since. And especially have i grieved about it since your father died."

Fanny's mother gave way to bitter weeping.

"Dear little mother," pleaded Fanny. You must not cry so. Haven't you asked God's forgiveness for all those failings? And how tender you were to father during his last years on earth! And now he is waiting for you in the heavenly home where there are no misunderstandings or discords."

"Oh, I know it," sobbed her mother. "But memories are cruel when they are of bitter things. Those poems the Captain has written stirred memories to life in me.

Your father used to write verses, too. He wrote poetry in my honor when we were young lovers, although his verse-making had not the grace of the Captain's."

"Did father write poetry?" said Fanny in surprise. "You have never before told me that! Have you kept any of the verses he wrote? It would be delightful to me to read them!"

"Yes, I have some of them," said her mother, "but the paper is yellow and mellow of age. Now that you have so kindly read the Captain's verses to me, I shall try to find some of father's poetry and read to you."

Mrs. Landers went into her room and soon reappeared before Fanny with a small packet of letters in her hand.

"Perhaps you'd like to read them to me, Fanny," she said. "You know I cannot see as well as formerly, and the writing is aged in these manuscripts."

"Nothing would please me more, mother dear. Why, it's a real festive time tonight, isn't it? Just think—verses by father to you—when you were young and romantic!"

Fanny opened and smoothed out papers. From some of the old torn missives faded remnants of pressed flowers fell out. In the folds of one lay a little bunch of lily of the valley. Accompanying this old faded tribute was a poem, entitled: "To Selma." Fanny began reading:

"This is your day, your own sweet day,
And humbly I dare come your way,
With flowers few that whisper true:
'We are for you! We are for you!
And please do listen, while we tell,
How John did pluck us in the dell
And bring us to his queen to plead
That she unto his wish give heed!
Though poor and undeserving, he
Doth ask that she his bride will be!

Oftimes he's prayed that God above
Should guide and bless him in his love.
His love, dear Selma, is so deep—
It haunts him waking and asleep!
His love is faithful, pure and true,
'Tis all for you! 'Tis all for you!
Yet should you spurn his love, say No,
Without a murmur would he go
His way alone, humbly aware
That God will keep you in His care!—

For long he's prayed that God shall bless
Your days on earth with happiness,
And grant you heaven's joy at last,
When human frailities are past'."

* * *

Fanny had read aloud. Her mother was again weeping.

"Mother dear, do not weep so!" begged Fanny. "It might make you ill! You know that father is happy in the heavenly home!"

"Yes, Fanny, he is happy in the heavenly home, if ever anyone is. For he was a wonderful Christian. Oh, how he prayed, how he trusted! In our younger days I was very shallow and worldly. I thought he went to church too often, and read the Bible too much. And he was always eager to entertain ministers and missionaries in our home. For me it became rather a burden to have them. I felt that I should have more consideration when it came to questions of hospitality, for I had brought most of the things in our home into it as my marriage dower. One evening when he especially wished me to attend a church

function, I deliberately refused and went to the theater instead."

Fanny's mother had to stop speaking for a moment and wipe her tears. Then she cried: "Oh you dear husband! You were so good and so kind!"

"Mother, please do not dwell on these memories. I am afraid, too, that our neighbors might hear how you weep!" said Fanny.

To draw her mother's attention away from the memories of her father, Fanny asked: "Tell me, mother, what would you think—if, if—Captain Brandt should propose marriage to me, what should I answer him? I do not know him well. It is difficult to judge of our fellowmen. Suppose we really could be congenial! Suppose, after we had learned to know one another better, we found we could not agree, were not suited to one another —that the infatuation we have had for each other was but admiration at a distance? That would be a rude awakening, indeed!"

Fanny's mother stopped weeping. "Dear child," she said. "Whether or not one is

suited to the other is something that no one can positively know until after marriage. Living together in the every day life will test and prove that."

"But then it is too late, if one should find out that we are not suited. Then we are already in the trap! That seems to me a calamitous time to realize a mistake!"

"Not necessary to speculate so, Fanny! Even in so serious a decision as the consent to marry, God is present to lead those who trust in Him. If married life at first should have its difficulties, and things not run entirely smooth, the Christian's common sense will overcome all this. I confess there was a time in my married life when I actually wished myself free from your father. But that was in the time of my pride and folly. Were he to come back to earth, and we were young once more, and I allowed to choose a husband from among a thousand men, I would choose *him!*"

Her mother paused, then went on to say: "When a noble and honorable Christian gentleman—one who truly loves the Lord—proposes marriage to a girl to

whom he feels attracted, there is no risk for her to accept him, provided, of course, she otherwise can love him—feels herself drawn to him in mutual admiration. What did Rebekah know about Isaac, in that long ago time, when by proxy Abraham's servant proposed marriage to her? When her father asked if she would consent to go with him, she unhesitatingly answered yes, and went trustingly and gladly to meet the future. Can't you have just as big a faith?"

There was silence for a moment. Then Fanny's mother continued: "I was deeply impressed with the Captain last evening when we had the opportunity to converse alone. When he spoke of Stanley and Elizabeth, and now and then humbly referred to himself, I felt as if I had known him a long, long time. He was open-hearted and charming. I could instantly detect that he is a clean and honorable fellow. I do not believe that his religion is a cloak. I think it is a through-and-through experience with him. Didn't you notice how his eyes dimmed with tears when you sang that hymn for him?"

"Mother dear," said Fanny. "You speak so beautifully in his behalf that I feel myself rejoicing and certain that he is the one God has sent to me."

Fanny then told her mother about the dream she had had, and about the meeting with him shortly after by the cemetery gate. She also confessed that she had continued to dream and think of him—of her unknown hero. Long into that night Fanny and her mother talked. Never before had they felt so close to one another, so confidential, so understanding. When they bade one another good-night in the wee hours, it was with a loving embrace, eloquent with the joy that had come to them that evening.

The next morning Fanny mailed the Captain's poems back to Stanley. But not until she had carefully copied them, for she wished to always keep them and read them over and over again. The more she read them, the more in love did she become with the poet! Her love was no longer a dream. It had come true!

She kept wondering, and fantasied how he would propose to her! The days came

and went quickly, but somehow they came and went all too slowly for Fanny. Sometime her ecstasy became clouded a bit by the thought that possibly *he* had not gotten a very favorable impression of her that evening of his visit, and had ceased to think about her. Interwoven with this thought was the old lady Hagerflykt! For if he was disappointed with his visit, she must have been largely to blame. Why did she have to bob in on the scene at such a critical time? If she hadn't been present, Fanny felt sure, it would have been easier to ones self. That pesky old lady always did appear at inopportune times! Her voice always did have to sound when it was least desired!

Whenever the mailman came, Fanny felt a strange curiosity, and eagerly scanned the postmarks and the handwritings. But day went and day came—without a word from him! Fanny had expected a line—a card perhaps—thanking his hostesses for the pleasant evening. But not even a card came! It began to be painful —this silence! Yet, why should she expect a letter from him? Love is that un-

reasonable! In Fanny's life it had become like a great floodtide. All her thoughts and feelings dashed like a turbulent stream toward a single outlet—toward *him*. So mighty became the anguish of the situation, that she could not sleep nights. Her appetite failed. She grew pale and nervous. Many a time she was tempted to write to Elizabeth and confess to her about this great love that qualmed in her soul. Perhaps, Elizabeth would somehow contrive to give Captain Brandt an inkling of it! But she conquered the temptation. She talked about it only with God and with her mother, being very discreet, however, in her confessions to her mother. For she could not bear to even let her mother know the intensity of her passion.

What if he had taken ill, and lay in a hospital somewhere—among strangers! Or his ship had met disaster! Fanny's imagination knew no bounds in fumbling for reasons why he did not write her.

Then, one day she found a letter on her writing table,—a letter unlike all others that she had ever received. Yes,

it was *his* handwriting, and it was addressed to *her!* It was postmarked London! With trembling fingers Fanny opened the precious missive. She read:

"Dear Miss Landers.

First, let me apologize humbly for my breach of etiquette. I regret exceedingly that I could not find time to write immediately after my very happy visit at your home and thank you for the inestimable pleasure that evening brought me. I did so much want to do so, and also send flowers as interpreters of the happy wishes I cannot find words to express. But we have no mailboxes and no florists at sea, regretably enough! Our trip, this time, was long and stormy, with a little bad luck to boot. This is the dark and misty time of the year, you know. And immediately that we came to port, work and workmen's troubles have kept me very busy.

But, if you can forgive me—well, I venture to ask it! And to thank you and your dear mother with all my heart for the hospitality you so bountifully showered upon me. I had such a pleasant visit with

your mother the first evening, and then, when she asked me to come again the following evening, my joy was doubled.

For there was nothing I more wished to do! And she said that you would be at home then! And you, Miss Landers, have been in my thoughts many years, ever since your father's death and your visit to the cemetery near my home, and your presence that time at the church service and later in the little mission house. I hardly dare to hope that you would remember the awkward sailor boy who stood by the churchyard gate as you, your mother and sister, came down the path from your father's grave. But there was something in your gaze, in your manner, in your whole being, that gave me an impression of joy so deep that it never left me, and I have ever since held your image sacred in my heart. From that meeting with you—your gaze—I count the days upon a better way, for I then began to compare myself with you, and it brought me face to face with the debt I owed my mother and my God. All this is too full of content to relate here.

But now I am bold enough to tell you that I love you! I love you with all my heart and all my desire, and ask you to give me your verdict, so to speak! The love I have born for you during the years I did not know you personally, only anchored itself more firmly in my soul the evening I had the coveted opportunity of meeting you and making your acquaintance close at hand.

You mentioned that your brother-in-law had told you that I am a professed Christian. Yes, I am happy to profess my dear Lord and Master, and only regret that I cannot serve him more perfectly. In so far as I understand His grace, I am a follower of Jesus Christ. This I have been since that Sunday when I saw you in the churchyard chapel and in the little mission house. For on that day I made my decision for Him. God used you, in His wonderful way, to make me see the error of my ways and to seek His forgiveness and peace.

But, it would be unfair to you, were I not to tell you that I am a man whose opportunities for culture have been very

small. I have tried to increase my knowledge by attending school evenings, and studying and reading during my spare time. And I have passed maritime examinations, so that I have both my first-mate and captain's papers. At present I have a good position and a fair salary, so that I believe I could support a comfortable little home. And there is always the possibility of promotion.

I dare not think that you will deign to answer this letter. But I have a lively imagination, and my great love for you spurs me to almost insane frankness and boldness! And I have even dared to speculate how impossible it would be for you and your dear mother to part, and to think —since that evening when I had the delight of meeting her and talking with her alone—how wonderful it would be if she could consent to be *my mother*, too. I felt so secure and happy in her presence, just as if I had been her son. She reminded me so much of my own dear mother, who passed away to glory when I was but sixteen years old.

Well, dear Miss Landers, now it has

happened—this inevitable thing of confessing to you what has been and is in the depths of my heart. I have often contemplated how I should do it, and wondered how *you* would take is. I wonder now if you will answer this letter? But I hope that you will tell me how you think of me. No matter which way—please tell me! May God's will be done. And I shall not expect your answer until you have learned something more about me. But, perhaps, your brother-in-law will vouch for me?

How I wish that I could send you some flowers! I would so have liked to send you some lily of the valley, for they would best interpret my thoughts of you, and show you the beauty that you have meant in my drab life these years that I have dreamed of you. With the words of your song—the hymn you sang for me in parting: "Hold Thou my hand,"—echoing in my ear and heart, I bring this letter, written in fear and trembling, but also in joy, to a close. Your lover,

Alfred Brandt."

It was late autumn in the great out-of-doors. The shadows were lurking and growing from twilight into night. But in the warm light of the Landers' living room, and in the heart of Fanny Landers, it was springtime! The sun was high on the horizon of her life, and lily of the valley bloomed at her feet! After a little while of just sitting and looking at the letter she had just read, she rose and went into her own room. She shut the door. She kneeled by her bed. She wanted to be alone with God. It was His leading that she sought, and the assurance that His will be done.

Then she sought her mother. She let her read the letter.

"Mother, dear, what do you think of it? He writes so frankly, does he not?"

"My child, I would say that it is a perfect love letter! And I am happy because he wrote it! And how beautifully he writes of me! May I read that again!"

Fanny let her mother read the letter through again.

Mrs. Landers wiped her tears away as she handed the letter back to her daughter.

"I feel that this is of the Lord," she said. "God has sent this man to you. How do you feel about it yourself?"

"There is no doubt in my soul about it," said Fanny. "I am already his in my heart."

"God bless you, Fanny. You deserve a good husband, for you have always been a good daughter."

Mother and daughter embraced. For a long time they were silent. In their hearts was contentment. The living-room seemed so peaceful and cozy—more peaceful and cozy than ever before. Nor was that peace disturbed though the world outside rumbled noisily on with its shouting and bustling amid the honk of automobiles and dingling of trolley cars.

VI.

In the Church.

ANOTHER winter had come and gone. It had been a mild winter, and spring came early. But it was a long and cold spring, so it took time for the world to wake up from winter's sleep and put on its verdure robes.

But when the warm weather did come at last—toward the end of May and beginning of June—everything burst forth at once. The fields grew green over night. One could almost see the growth of the grain and grass in minute process. Bush and tree bloomed in profusion. The wild flowers in meadow and woodland danced to the merry gusts of the south wind as if there were nothing in the world but gladness and delight. Gardens flourished in the sunlight. The birds rejoiced as they built nests and scurried for worms. Nature was hurrying with delight toward the high days of summer. The whole earth seemed full of beauty, life, hope and joy.

In the midst of all this gaiety the chapel bells in the churchyard tolled dirges, while funeral processions stepped solemnly along the walks. The somberness of the mourners marked deep contrast to all the light and joy of Nature. Among the dead to be sunk in the new-made graves were young folks and old folks. The time of new leaves and rising sap is fatal to the weak among humans. It is a time when many youthful dreams are thwarted and nipped in the bud. And many a heart has had to face the glorious summer with a fall-time outlook upon life—sadness and emptiness of joylessness! Such is life! Nothing lasting under the heavens! Contrasts! Questioning!

Yet the birds in the trees over chapel and tombstone sang not of death and corruption! They sang only of life and transfiguration! They sang of the love that could change the toll of church bell from dirge to bridal march!

Perhaps, ah, more than likely, it was not the same birds that sang each year. And on this particular day in early summer, surely it was not the same birds who

had sung there some nine or ten years before. It must have been their grandchildren in several generations down the line! The life of a bird is surely not long. Owls and cats and many other enemies lurk by. Wings wear out. Cold and frost and hunger come. In the long migrations many a songster has fallen by the wayside, tired, and died. But their descendants fly joyfully on the same flights, singing as they go.

Life is strong! It weaves its garlands and tunes its music above the graves. Should the garlands break or the music fail betimes, there are ever new flowers and greens with which to weave, and vibrant tones from which to hearten and attune the instruments of joy. New beauty, new joy, new song! Wonderful, puzzling life!

There was joy in the churchyard this day. There was a procession—a steady stream of people wending its way toward the chapel. There were many young folks and many old folks. The little church was decorated within and without with garlands. Fastening the greens to each

pew were blushing peonies, that smiled all over their pretty faces. The chapel auditorium was arranged for guests. The general public was allowed seating and standing place everywhere except in the first few rows of pews, near the altar. In the balcony, by the organ, a choir had gathered.

Lily of the valley graced the altar.

The wedding guests filled the church to capacity. Most of the women folks were dressed in white, and had adorned themselves with flowers. The men folks had relieved the usual somberness of their Sunday best garbs with white vests and flowers in the coat lapel.

Would the wedding party ever arrive? It was not an every day event to have such a wedding in the little churchyard chapel. Folks did not often choose so humble a place to hold their nuptials. The curiosity of the audience was intense. Among the singers on the balcony were old Captain Berg and his two daughters. Many of the ladies in the main auditorium were whispering to one another. There was a general wishing to know who this

one was and who that one was! There was quite a general and audible appreciation of the decorations, and those who had not before seen the church admired its native beauty and simplicity. A bird or two, bold enough to peep in through the open windows, chirpped a wedding march in advance.

Then the organ began to sing. It was the wedding march. Every head was turned toward the entrance. Yes, there came the wedding party! Bridesmaids and ushers walked slowly toward the chancel. The minister had already taken his place by the altar. Then came the bride. Then the groom. The bride was beautiful in white. She carried a bouquet of lily of the valley. By the altar both bowed their heads in silent prayer. The choir sang a beautiful anthem. And then the marriage ceremony took place. Again the choir sang. It sang a hymn of joy, a prayer for the happiness of the bridal pair, composed especially in their honor.

"What a handsome pair!" whispered many lips as the bride and groom turned their faces toward the audience. And as

they marched down the aisle toward the entrance again, there was much bustle among the guests.

"Who would have thought," said one little old lady, "that that Brandt boy would ever come to this?"

"Yes," said her neighbor, "old man Brandt has certainly cause to be proud of him now! Such distinguished folks as he has now acquired as relatives, I am sure he has never seen before."

"Wouldn't his mother rejoice," said another, "if she could see Alfred now?"

"He has had good luck, all right," exclaimed one who had known him since he was a tiny boy. "Folks say she is wealthy. And she certainly is pretty!"

"Luck? Some folks are always talking about luck!" growled a little fat man, who had overheard the women's remarks. "But there isn't so much luck in the world as one might suppose! It all depends upon your own grit. If Captain Brandt had been like many other young fellows in this community, how far do you suppose he would have fared? If he had spent his days by drinking and dallying? He

turned his attention to better things. He is a professing Christian, you know."

"Well," said one of the women folk, "everybody who is a professing Christian does not have the luck that he has had! I suppose much depends, too, upon the way one uses ones natural gifts."

"What does it help anyone who has natural good gifts, if he abuses them? Drinks! Brawls! Lives like a fool?"

"H'm, h'm!" nodded the others.

A dressmaker, standing among another group of women at the entrance, exclaimed, as she watched the bride and groom depart in their equipage: "What a handsome bridegroom!"

"Yes," said one of her companions, "and did you see that younger Berg girl weep during the ceremony? You can be sure she was wishing she were the lucky bride!"

"Nothing to wonder at," continued another gossiper. "Who wouldn't have liked to win *him?* He is a prize to this community. What a bevy of saintly swains we would have for our daughters to choose

among, if all the boys in our town were like *him!*"

And so the gossip kept up as the folks, who had long known Alfred Brandt and his early days in the home community, journeyed back to their humdrum lives after the wedding festivities were over.

But that evening, when twilight had begun, Captain Brandt and his beamingly happy bride came to the churchyard. They were dressed for a journey. But they carried bouquets of lily of the valley. Each accompanied the other to two graves—the one of her father and the other of his mother. They wanted to have them share in their great happiness. There was a simple but beautiful tombstone at the head of Alfred's mother's resting place. Fanny's father slept under a stately monument. As the happy bride and groom stood first by the one grave and then by the other, they thanked God for the wonderful gift of Christian parents. They felt that it had been largely the prayers of this mother and of this father, whose spirits were now among the blessed in glory, that had destined them to the joy

of Christian living and brought them together in mutual love and understanding. Nor were they tears of sadness that watered the lily of the valley, placed lovingly on the sod above the sleeping ones. They were tears of joy and thanksgiving!

As they walked toward the cemetery gate, Alfred said: "Fanny, please stand there a moment!" Then he walked to the gate where he had stood the first time he had ever seen her.

"Fanny, do you recall?"

"Dear Alfred, I remember it!"

"Blessed be my mother's God," said he, "that He let me meet you here. And blessed be that moment when you let me see the beauty of your soul—when you deigned to gaze at me with those wonderful eyes of yours!"

And Fanny answered: "Blessed be my father's God, the dream He gave me, and the meeting with you!"

A minute of silence. Then the twitter of a bird in a tree close by. Alfred took his bride by the arm, and in close embrace they went out through the churchyard gate, out to meet the future, a strong

man and a noble woman, leaving behind them the sacred ground, where for them love had known its first pangs, and found its holy altar.

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